

Volunteer Best Practices

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- e. Empower and promote volunteers
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- a. Keep records
- b. Keep in touch
- c. Draw volunteers into culture

Volunteer Best Practices

1. VOLUNTEERS BUILD YOUR EVENT AND BRAND

Benefits of a Volunteer Team

Volunteers who are engaged and passionate about our organization's mission are one of our most valuable resources. There is a wealth of professional skill and many rich networks to which volunteers have access. Many are leaders who possess a passion for serving their community with an ethos that aligns with ours and makes them excellent marketers for Leadercast.

The benefit of a fully engaged volunteer team extends far beyond freeing an organization of labor costs...

- Volunteers expand our ability to deliver personalized care and a great attendee experience
- The free staff to perform their responsibilities well
- Volunteers possess valuable skills and connections they are willing to share with those they trust
- Volunteers spread our brand's story

Building a Team is an Investment

Volunteers are not free labor. Building a volunteer support team requires a dedicated commitment of time and finance. The cost of recruiting, managing and rewarding volunteers is an investment well worth the benefits they bring. Consistent volunteer care will build a support team that represents the brand well, multiplies our reach, and inspires fresh passion within staff members. The level we invest in them determines the vibrancy of our volunteer team and the longevity of the relationship we enjoy with each one.

Recruit + Reward + Recognize = Retain Remarkable Volunteers

Once we have recruited a volunteer, we need to get to know and appreciate their individual strengths. Personal recognition, empowerment and gestures of appreciation will enable us to retain a strong pool of potential volunteers for the next event.

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Repeat volunteers are the most valuable reward we glean from a good volunteer program

- Repeat volunteers serve with increased experience and ability to serve attendees well.
- They can assume leadership and help coach new volunteers.
- They are the best recruiters of additional volunteers for future events.

2. PLANNING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Offer a Fulfilling Opportunity

Volunteers are selective about where they serve. They want to experience the fulfillment of knowing their actions are making a difference. The most important incentive we can offer is the knowledge that they are donating their time to a mission that aligns to their ideals and is making a tangible difference in that area. Impart vision in every communication with volunteers and affirm the part they are playing in accomplishing it.

A Volunteer's Needs and Expectations

1. **A reason** for doing the task. They want to make a purposeful contribution.
2. **A task description**, in writing.
3. **Training** so they can carry out the assignment correctly.
4. **The resources they'll need** to complete a task without being held up.
5. **A time frame** in which the assignment needs to be completed.
6. **A safe, comfortable, and friendly working environment** where they feel welcome and included in the team.
7. **Knowledge of who they report to on event day.** Avoid having anyone report to more than one person.
8. **Refreshments.** Have energy boosting drinks and snacks available.
9. **Appreciation.** Express genuine appreciation, often and in varied ways.
10. **Recognition.** Recognize a volunteer's strengths and potential by placing them in appropriate assignments. Promote capable volunteers to leadership roles.
11. **Thoughtful rewards.** Volunteers should never be paid, but always try to reward them with an appropriate gift.
12. **Mutual feedback.** Include your team in the wins of the day! Give them feedback and let them give us feedback. Volunteers have eyes on the ground in areas staff don't always get to see. Their feedback can help us plan a better guest and volunteer experience for the future.

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Leadercast's Expectations

The PRIME focus of staff and volunteers must be to deliver an exceptional guest experience to our attendees. After the event, Leadercast volunteers normally receive an opportunity to listen to speaker content online but be clear in communicating to prospective recruits that volunteering is not a free pass to the event. We rely on volunteers to keep their time commitments and serve in a way that will represent our organization well. Any change to their contract details or availability needs to be communicated to us as early as possible.

Resources and Budget

The expected attendees, venue layout and experiences planned for your guests will help you determine how many volunteers are needed. In preparing an event budget, don't make the mistake of overlooking the need to host volunteers in a way that demonstrates appreciation. The care of your team is an important investment in light of the important contribution they make to your guest experience as well as the impact it will make on future recruiting efforts. Include catering, small tokens of appreciation, cards and postage of thank you cards in your event budget. You may also be considering a unique volunteer T-shirts/identification, and parking passes for the venue, at least for those who would like assistance in covering that charge.

3. RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Set Up a System

Have a system in place to manage your recruiting and follow up process to ensure no one's application is overlooked, and everyone is followed up consistently. Direct every prospective volunteer to the same process of registration. An immediate customized autoresponse can be helpful, but once you have reviewed their registration, follow up with a personal welcome acknowledging important comments they have made. They could also receive a link to a Volunteer Facebook group and be given other helpful relevant information. Make sure they are incorporated into your volunteer schedule and placed on an appropriate team. A template for each new level of information can help you manage the process well, regardless of when they sign up.

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Sign Up Form

Volunteer sign ups work best with an automated registration form linked to your website. Make your form simple and user friendly but ask for all the details needed to make further contact and assign teams. Include specific shifts and expected role assignments volunteers can select from.

Communicate enough information for people to make a commitment they will be able to keep. Include and clarify the following:

- That this is a volunteer opportunity (unpaid)
- Precise venue locations • Shift times they can choose from
- General roles and responsibilities
- T-shirt size, if you are providing one
- An indemnity

Where to Get Volunteers

Highlight the Volunteer opportunity on your event website with a link to relevant information. Mention the benefits of people volunteering for your event, but don't promise anything you may not be able to deliver!

Early recruiting will get more response from reliable planners. Schools and other organizations will also want to consider an invitation well in advance. Reach out to...

- Previous volunteers (they make ideal recruiters as well)
- High schools and colleges
- Churches and community groups
- Partners, sponsors, and friends of the brand

Team Assignments

Take note of the volunteer's time preference as they are scheduled into assignments. Notify them of which teams they are on and what will be expected of them, but also prepare them to be flexible about where they serve, in case teams need to be adjusted due to unforeseen changes. Assure them they'll be given training and support.

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4. PREPARING VOLUNTEERS FOR THE EVENT

Communicate Well

As more event plans are confirmed, build a sense of excitement by sharing updates with the team. This reminds them of their commitment. A private Facebook group is a great way to build team spirit and enable communication, but not all volunteers utilize Facebook. Make sure important communication goes out to everyone by email and text in order to decrease the chance of absentee volunteers.

Appoint Group Leaders

Experienced volunteers with leadership skills make great group leaders and take the pressure off busy staff members. Choose leaders that are available for pre-event training that week to equip them to train their own group on event day

Prepare a training script to give new leaders confidence and ensure they communicate all vital information clearly. Let volunteers know that you are giving the group leader their name and contact number and can expect a text from them. At the event, empower group leaders to lead by making sure you communicate instructions to the team through the group leader.

Volunteer Training

The best training is by example. Start their day by having staff and leaders model the welcome you want volunteers to give to your guests. From communicating directions on parking to getting them efficiently checked in and trained, give volunteers a great example of Leadercast hospitality.

Set the tone for the day by officially welcoming volunteers and giving them an overview of the day's goals. Let them know how many people are attending the event and how many volunteers are serving. Share the areas of training that apply to all volunteers such as venue layouts, guidelines to serving with excellence and their eating and check out arrangements. Inspire the team and communicate clear directions on transitioning to their groups, especially where they have more than one assignment.

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Group Leaders can meet with their group in a pre-determined location where individual group assignments can be communicated with the least distraction. Group training needs to be effectively timed and practical, so that every volunteer is positioned and resourced in time to serve even the earliest attendee. Volunteers should keep their group leader informed on their location and support their fellow group members throughout the event. Group Leaders need the support of staff members in helping them communicate an informed and consistent message to every volunteer.

Example Schedule: Volunteer Check in and Training

5:45 AM	Leaders arrive, get ready to welcome and check in volunteers
6:00 AM	Volunteers check in, confirm final assignments, collect and put on t-shirts, name badges/lanyards
6:15 AM	Coffee & breakfast sandwiches
6:30 AM	Orientation: welcome, inspire and instruct volunteers
6:40 AM	Leaders introduced: problem shoot (absentees? Adjust teams as necessary)
6:45 AM	Groups trained for their assignment
7:00 AM	Venues checked, volunteers understand assigned areas
7:30 AM	Outer doors open to attendees – speaker & guest arrivals begin
8:00 AM	Main auditorium doors open

Volunteer Coordinator's Role

A Volunteer Coordinator is there to care for the volunteer team and make sure they serve with excellence. Avoid taking on responsibilities that mean you are unavailable to group leaders and volunteers. Budget your time knowing there will be problems to sort out. Even faithful volunteers experience a family crisis or come down with a case of flu that may prevent them attending. Show support, not frustration, when they call to let you know.

Prep and Event days are an opportunity to get to know volunteers and identify their individual strengths. Be clearly aware of the schedule and any potential challenges, but always stay sensitive in the way you relate to our volunteers and fellow team members.

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Volunteer Meeting Place

Provide a designated area where volunteers check in, get their name badge, have a snack and relax during the breaks they may get. Adding some music and posters to their meeting area will provide extra inspiration to the team!

Make sure the volunteer meeting place is well marked and there is someone to welcome them. If the team is large, assign more than one volunteer to serve at Volunteer Registration, set out snacks, keep the volunteer area welcoming, and help keep an eye on volunteers' belongings.

Event Schedule

Give each person a schedule for the day and print a large event schedule for the wall. Break down volunteer duties for each half hour or less. Be clear on how breaks and lunches will vary depending on their assignment. Regardless of what the schedule says, volunteers should confirm with their group leader before leaving an assigned area or checking-out.

Group leaders need to ensure that every team member understands their assignment and keeps to their schedule. They should always know where their group members are. In some venues, a specific seating area can be assigned at the back of the venue for volunteers who have been released by their group leader for a break. They need to be easily located and able to slip out early for their next duty, without distracting attendees in any way.

5. RETAIN A VIBRANT VOLUNTEER TEAM, YEAR AFTER YEAR!

Give Appropriate Rewards

Whenever possible Leadercast will provide our volunteers with personal online access to the speaker content of each event. Content access is a valuable volunteer gift that ties back to the organizational mission and is highly appreciated by most of the team. You may also be fortunate enough to get a small volunteer gift sponsored for volunteers to receive when they check out. A handwritten thank you card to leaders, mailed soon after the event is also important.

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Prize draws for gift cards can add lots of fun to the event but stay clear of giving out cash or money cards that resemble a form of payment. They detract from a culture of volunteering, set precedents that may be difficult to sustain, and carry tax implications for both the organization and the volunteer.

Recognize Them

The most appreciated reward of all is the recognition of a volunteer's contribution. Acknowledge everyone, no matter how much time they are able to give. Public and personal thanks to all our volunteers is important. Give additional appreciation personally and in writing, to group leaders and also to volunteers who put in extra effort. Promoting them to a position of leadership on the next team will confirm our respect and, hopefully, inspire many to continue their commitment in the future.

Keep Records

Be diligent in recording volunteer attendance at check in. Show volunteers that our organization appreciates and values them by keeping a record of overall service years. Acknowledge continued service in a meaningful way.

Share Photographs

Schedule a time and location for everyone to meet for a photo of the entire team and take high quality photographs of volunteers enjoying their roles at the event. These are a great addition to 'thank you' emails and social media recruiting.

Stay in Touch

Continue to nurture the amazing people who served with us:

- Follow up with a 'THANK YOU' email or text immediately after the event.
- Review volunteer feedback reports. Acknowledge even critical feedback, with appreciation. Take action on obvious points of frustration.
- Keep volunteers connected through a social media group, email list or birthday card. Build relationships in which we don't just communicate with people when we need help, but we draw volunteers into our team culture.

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Draw Volunteers into Our Culture

Invite volunteers to subscribe to our social media platforms and email notifications. Let them know when Leadercast is holding events open to the public. There are skilled leaders among our volunteers who could be of enormous benefit in assisting our organization with special projects. Many would be delighted to consult with our organization on a voluntary basis and know that they are serving our vision of filling the world with leaders worth following.

Whatever their area of expertise, most volunteers have a rich network of family and friends. They will undoubtedly tell other people about their experience. Treat every volunteer with the same care as our other partners and they will reward us by being exceptional goodwill ambassadors for our future events.